9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Christian ones, do not celebrate and nothing happens to them, so we no longer fear ourselves.' By 1937 the pagan rituals of kinship had been largely dropped in Ngonde, and around Rungwe mission they were disappearing, though in Selya no pagan dared neglect them. They were taken more seriously by the women than by the men, and many of the young men were openly scornful. The young men are eclectic in their beliefs, jeering at the twin ritual when they may be fearful of any neglect of the ritual of death; doubting the power of rain-makers, but terrified of a neighbour's sorcery.

(c) CHRISTIAN RITUAL AND DOGMA

And what are the alternatives to the traditional rituals? Celebrations at death, marriage, and birth continue—probably some sort of ritual on these occasions is universal in human societies. There is no celebration of a girl's puberty, as among the pagans, but the ritual of confirmation is, in one sense, parallel, for it is an acknowledgment of maturity by the acceptance of an individual into the full fellowship of the Church; but maturity in the Church, and the symbolic death and rebirth, are not necessarily linked with physiological development, as they are in the pagan ritual of *ulunenge*.[1]

All the Christian rituals are *communal* in the sense that they are centred in the Church—the Christian community; none is primarily a ritual of kinship. This is most pointed at a christening, when a child is received into the fellowship of the Church, whereas in the pagan birth ritual it is acknowledged as a member of the father's lineage by being given *ilipili* medicine (which is 'the blood of the lineage') by its paternal grandmother. Sometimes both rituals are celebrated by Christians who interpret the *ilipili* as an acknowledgment of legitimacy, and a medicine necessary to the child's health, but this is frowned upon by the more orthodox. A dying man is comforted by the priest or elders of the Church, and in some communions he receives the sacrament, the symbol of his salvation through Christ and his membership of the community of believers. At a funeral the members of the local Christian congregation take the leading part, comforting the mourners with prayers and hymns, digging the grave, and burying the dead. The contrast with a pagan funeral, in which cattle are

[1] The pagan rituals referred to in this section are described in *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*.

9:Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

We remarked to a Christian friend, a deacon, that the rains were late. He replied: 'Well, it is not so very unusual. Sometimes rains begin in one part of the country and not in another. Sometimes we do not get heavy rain down here until the end of January.' In short, the more educated Christians are beginning to think in more general terms: they do not as yet define probabilities statistically in terms of rainfall averages, but they are tending in that direction. 797' 795 [821] [112]

And what of the positive content of Christianity? The supreme attraction, mentioned again and again as the reason for conversion, is: 'There is life' (*ukumi kuliko*), and it is life in a world to come rather than 'more abundant life' here and now that is spoken of. The contrast is between heaven above and the shadowy world 'beneath' of pagan thought, or a fearful fiery hell in which most Christians believe and to which, some think, all pagans are condemned. Constantly in sermons by Nyakyusa preachers there was stress on life, resurrection, and on the rewards and punishments of the future life, and this theme recurs again and again in the dreams of Christians. [775] [772]

There is a gulf also between the pagan conception of 'driving off' the shades and the heroes left by 'brooding over' a man they bring madness and death, and the Christian ideal of union with God. Sermons stress the goodness and love of God, characteristics quite foreign to the traditional picture of Kyala. [769] [775] [776]

Something of the quality of Christian thought and feeling may be grasped by an examination of the names taken at baptism—the convert from paganism always chooses a new name for himself and the meaning is more immediately obvious to everyone than is is with modern English Christian names derived, as they mostly are, from languages no longer familiar. Many of the Nyakyusa names express a very direct personal relationship with God, the Redeemer: 'He has looked upon me', 'He has rescued me', 'He has waited hoping for me', 'He has died for me', 'He gives me courage', 'He has changed me', 'He has chosen me out', 'He has comforted me', and a score more of the same type. Some refer to the Gospels: 'Word of Truth', 'The Word has taken hold of me'. A few speak of purification: 'Make me white', 'He has washed me'. Some express that union with God which the pagans so greatly fear: 'We are with him', 'He has come near', 'He has brooded over me', 'Let us approach', and some thanksgiving: 'Let us sing to Him', 'We praise Him', 'We have rejoiced', and some like: 'He is risen', 797' 795 [55] [553] [852]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F7017 Ngonde F7017
Nyakyusa

one of the early missionaries the sons of leading men had been sent to Kondowe to be educated and their influence had been important in gaining the support of the Kyungu and chiefs for the mission. 717[1] 795[2]

In the second generation of Christians not nearly all those baptized in infancy come to be confirmed or 'blessed'—an elder in Ngonde put it at about half. There is, therefore, a large group of people who have been Church members and have been struck off the Church register because they have married a second wife or committed adultery or become drunkards, and show no sign of repentance, and of those who have grown up as Christians, but have not maintained any connexion with a Church in later life. [688]

So far we have talked of Christian rituals and dogmas in terms of the three mission Churches whose converts form the great bulk of Christians: differences between them are negligible. The doctrinal differences between Protestant and Roman Catholic do not bulk large to the Nyakyusa, and since the Roman Catholic Church had not been operating for any long period among them and had a membership of under 1,000, many of whom were Ngoni from Songea or Kisi, who had settled in Tukuyu district, it was not possible to make any adequate comparison of the differences between Protestant and Catholic groups.

Two small Churches, the Pentecostal Holiness and the Watch Tower, had certain peculiarities. The Pentecostal Holiness Church holds highly emotional services at which members are expected to 'speak with tongues'; during prayers the whole congregation begins to jabber, each man usually being unintelligible to his neighbour, though words of other languages can be distinguished. Our informants maintained that the attraction of the Church was that its members seemed to 'have more of the Holy Ghost', as demonstrated by the 'speaking with tongues', though the more cynical of outsiders mentioned also 'the loaves and fishes'—cheaper Bibles, and the fact that the European leader was the largest employer of labour in the district and those who belonged to his Church got on best with him. Many of the members had formerly been Moravians. Its rules were strict: members were not permitted to smoke or drink, or use any Nyakyusa medicines. [781] [776] [644] [785]

The Watch Tower members emphasized that their Church, through its leader, Judge Rutherford, interpreted prophecy in a way in which no other Church could do. They practised baptism [833]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F3617 Ngonde F3617
Nyakyusa

by immersion and were strict about not eating the flesh of animals without a cloven hoof, and avoiding beer, but made a point of not being abstinarian and working in their fields on Sundays—these were the things they emphasized to us. They were also pacifist and would not join the Police or King's African Rifles, since Rutherford taught that all Government was evil.

(d) 'INDEPENDENT' AFRICAN CHURCHES

There is a great cleavage between the mission Churches and the 'independent' African Churches, which also claim to be Christian, read the Gospels at their services, and recite the Apostles' creed, but whose rules of life are avowedly based on the Old Testament rather than the New (*vide* p. 191). Both the 'independent' Churches operating in BuNyakyusa approve polygyny; the bulk of their members are middle-aged polygynists and they have at least as many men as women among them. Nyamuru's statement on polygyny was interesting:

> When we young men went to join the mission we found that many of our fathers were attracted by it. They said to us: 'If only the Europeans would let us come in with all our wives we would come.' . . . Sometimes it would happen that the son of an old man's second wife would join the mission and become a preacher and he would preach even to his father, saying: 'You pagans do wrong, you marry many women, you must repent, your ways are evil.' Then his father would say to him: 'On the contrary, it is not I who do wrong, if I had married only one wife you would never have been born, and you young men take one wife only and then what happens? You steal other men's wives, continually, in secret, and the country is full of lawsuits about women. It is our custom which is good.' . . . And so we, now, we have our Church and our fathers come in with us. It is our aim to take the old people with us, not ourselves to go forward alone. All the other matters which the missionaries brought to us we think are good, only this European custom of marriage is difficult.

Nyamuru and Ngwesa had both been suspended from the Church of Scotland Mission for marrying second wives, and Nyamuru, a man of fifty-three, had four wives when we knew him. He kindly provided us with a copy of a statement on the beliefs and constitution of the African National Church, which is worth quoting in full: